



OSPIRANTER RUFUS.

J. Gould and H. C. Richter, del et lith

Hallman & Watson Imp

OSPHRANTER RUFUS.

Great Red Kangaroo.

HEAD OF A MALE, LIFE-SIZE.

I REGRET very much to say that the time may not be far distant when an opportunity of giving a full-sized drawing of the head of this noble animal, taken from life, will not be possible. The larger and more conspicuous productions of an island are often, as a natural consequence, the first that become extirpated; and this result takes place more speedily where no protection is afforded to them. Short-sighted indeed are the Anglo-Australians, or they would long ere this have made laws for the preservation of their highly singular, and in many instances noble, indigenous animals; and doubly short-sighted are they for wishing to introduce into Australia the productions of other climes, whose forms and nature are not adapted to that country. Let me then urge them to bestir themselves, ere it be too late, to establish laws for the preservation of the large Kangaroos, the Emeu, and other conspicuous indigenous animals: without some such protection, the remnant that is left will soon disappear, to be followed by unavailing regret for the apathy with which they had been previously regarded. I make no apology, therefore, for publishing a life-sized head of the Great Red Kangaroo of the plains, a detailed history of which will be found accompanying the reduced figures.





OSPIRANTER RUFUS.

Thomson and W. C. Nicholls, del. et lith.

Illustrated by W. C. Nicholls.

OSPHRANTER RUFUS.

Great Red Kangaroo.

Kangurus rufus, Desm. Mamm. Supp., p. 541.—Gray, in Griff. Anim. Kingd., vol. v. p. 202.

——— *laniger*, Gaim. Bull. des Sci. par la Soc. Philom., année 1822, p. 138.—Quoy et Gaim. Voy. de l'Uranie, p. 65. pl. 9.

Macropus lanigerus, Gray, in Griff. Anim. Kingd., vol. iii. p. 49. pl. opposite p. 48.

——— *laniger*, G. Benn. Cat. of Australian Museum, Sydney, p. 6. no. 28.—Gould, Mon. of Macropodidæ.
—Gray, List of Mamm. in Coll. Brit. Mus., p. 88.

——— (*Halmaturus*) *rufus*, Waterh. Nat. Hist. Mamm., vol. i. p. 104.

Not only is this species the most beautiful member of the family to which it belongs, but it may also be regarded as the finest of the indigenous Mammals of Australia yet discovered; its large size, great elegance of form, and rich and conspicuous colouring all tending to warrant such an opinion. A splendid male, which in health and colour fully equals any examples I have personally observed in their native wilds, is now (1853) living in the Gardens of the Zoological Society in the Regent's Park, and, although it has not yet attained the stature of a fully adult animal, forms an object of great attraction to the visitors, and particularly to those naturalists who take an interest in the singular Mammals of Australia. This fine example is the first that I have seen alive in Europe; and it will be much to be regretted if a female cannot be procured, for in all probability the success which has attended the introduction of the Common Kangaroo and other members of the family would also wait upon the domestication of this noble animal, and ultimately lead to the perpetuation of its race in Europe; an object of the highest importance, since from the limited extent of its native habitat, daily encroached upon by civilized man, and the wanton manner in which it is unrelentingly killed, it is constantly becoming more and more scarce in the open plains and low grassy hills of its native land. The kind of country it frequents being of the utmost value to the pastoral portion of the Australian community, it is diligently sought for and occupied as soon as found, for depasturing their immense flocks and herds, in the stockmen and keepers of which, aided by their fleet, powerful, and well-trained dogs, the Red Kangaroo finds an enemy which at once drives it from all newly occupied districts, and which will ultimately lead to its entire extirpation, unless some law be enacted for its preservation; and to this point I would direct the attention of the present enlightened Governor and Assembly of New South Wales, who surely will not hesitate to make some provision for the protection of this noble animal, as well as for some other fine species of the family still inhabiting that Colony; in fact, if this be not done, a few years will see them expunged from the Fauna of Australia.

The range of the Great Red Kangaroo, so far as it is yet known, extends over the plains of the interior of the Colonies of New South Wales, Port Philip, and South Australia; I have never seen a specimen from the country to the westward of the latter colony, or from the northward of the latitude of Moreton Bay; the plains bordering the rivers Gwydyr, Namoi, Morumbidgee, Darling and Murray, and the grassy hills of South Australia, particularly those to the northward of Adelaide, are the districts over which it formerly ranged in abundance, and in which, notwithstanding the persecution to which it has been subjected, it may still be found, though in much smaller numbers. It does not so strictly affect the rich grassy plains as the Common Kangaroo (*Macropus major*), but evinces a greater partiality for the sides of the low stony hills and patches of hard ground clothed with box, intersecting those alluvial flats. In this part of its economy, as well as in the structure of its hinder feet, the greater length of its arms, the comparative nakedness of its muzzle, and in the much smaller size of the female compared with the females of the true *Macropi*, and in the difference in the colouring of the sexes, it is most intimately allied to the Great Rock Walleroos, to which I have given the generic name of *Osphranter*, and hence I have been induced to associate it with the members of that genus, and to call it *Osphranter rufus*, which latter or specific name has the priority over that of *laniger* assigned to it by M. Gaimard, and under which it appears in my "Monograph of the Macropodidæ." It is to be regretted that the colouring of the fur of this fine animal cannot by any means be preserved after death if exposed to light; nothing can be more different than its colour on the living animal and that of the mounted specimens in the National Museum, which were procured by myself while in Australia; so great in fact is the difference, that they might readily be mistaken for two different animals. The beautiful pink hue of the throat and chest appears to be due to some peculiar exudation from the skin rather than to the colouring of the hair itself; for if those parts be rubbed with a white handkerchief, a pinky pollen-like substance will be found adhering to it: this tint is deeper at some seasons than at others, and is probably developed under some particular condition of the animal.

The female is still more gracefully and elegantly formed than the male, and has a very different style of

colouring, delicate blue being the prevailing tint in those parts which in the male are red, whence the colonial names for the two sexes of Red Buck and Blue Doe; the female has also been called the Flying Doe, from her extraordinary fleetness, which is in fact so great, that I have no hesitation in saying that on hard ground and under favourable circumstances she would outstrip the fastest dogs. Occasionally both sexes are run successfully, either from the chase being over soft muddy soil, or from the female being encumbered with a large and heavy young one, which she has not been able to eject from the pouch, as she always will do if possible when hardly pressed; the female specimen in the British Museum above alluded to was procured under these circumstances. Observing a pair sheltering from the heat of the sun under a small group of Myalls (*Acacia pendula*) on the plains near the Namoi, I succeeded in leading a fine dog to within seventy yards without being perceived; the dog was so quickly at the heels of the female, which was carrying a large young one, that her escape was impossible: the male in the British Museum was also secured by a single dog, which, after a short chase, "pulled" and kept him at bay until I came up and despatched him, after a fearful resistance. It weighed above two hundred pounds, and was killed while I was making a forced march between the River Murray and the City of Adelaide, at a time when our provisions were exhausted, and I can therefore speak with a lasting recollection of its flesh, which supported me and my party for four days.

The male has the head, all the upper surface and flanks rich orange-red; a wash of grey on the outer side of the thigh; sides of the muzzle as far as the angle of the mouth and the chin white; intermingled with the white of the muzzle some interrupted rows of black hairs; ears white at the base, the remainder greyish brown, fringed with white; throat and chest delicate pink, deeper at some seasons than at others; arms and legs tawny white; hands and toes blackish brown; under surface of the body and tail white, tinged with tawny.

The female is blue-grey where the male is red, but has a wash of red on the sides of the body and the haunches tinged with vinous; has a broad white mark extending from the angle of the mouth under the eye, and the under surface of the body and the limbs pure white.

In the young animal the upper surface is nearly of a uniform blue-grey.

As a reduced figure can give but a faint idea of the size of this fine animal, I give the measurements of the male killed near the Namoi.

Total length from the nose to the end of the tail eight feet two inches; of the tail three feet; of the arm, hand and nails eighteen inches and a half; of the tarsi, toes and nail fourteen inches; of the face from the tip of the nose to the base of the ear eight inches; of the ear five inches and a half.

The drawing of the head, taken by Mr. Richter from the animal in the Gardens of the Zoological Society, is about two-thirds of the fully adult size.